



Berlin: New Architecture

The unification of a capital

30 May–3 June 2023 (MJ 748)

5 days • £2,280

Lecturer: Tom Abbott

Europe's biggest concentration of contemporary architecture.

The list of architects virtually comprises a roll-call of the world's leading architectural practices.

Access to private places, and time for some of the standard sights.

Itinerary

Because this itinerary is dependent on a number of appointments and special arrangements, the order and even the content of the tour may vary.

Day 1. Fly at c. 11.00am from London Heathrow to Berlin (British Airways). Travel by coach to central Berlin via the *Felleshus*, or pan-Nordic building. The complex houses five embassies, each of which were designed quite distinctively by architects of the respective countries. The houses are arranged according to their location on the map. Even the North and Baltic Seas are represented by three water basins between the buildings. Drive to Hans Scharoun's original and organic *Philharmonie* (concert hall) for a guided tour. Continue to the hotel, passing the *Mediaspree*, established to house the media industries along the banks of the River Spree. The devastated 19th- and early 20th-century industrial landscape has been reborn, with striking contemporary additions, including a hotel, its dramatic arm cantilevered over the water.

Day 2. Post-War and post-Wall Berlin has been all about melding old with new. The art scene in Berlin began its renaissance in the mid-90s with a migration to the Scheunenviertel (Barn Quarter) in the old East, now home to a multitude of high-fashion galleries, bars, and cafés. Elsewhere, antique and modern sit easily side by side. Berlin's renewal has involved some of the greatest names in post-War architecture. We visit David Chipperfield's James Simon Gallery, designed as the entrance to the Museum Island, and the Neues Museum, a mediation on damage, with fragments of fresco, carving and old brick work exposed alongside new construction; Harris + Kurrle's cuboid Archaeological Centre citing Egyptian temple architecture at the National Museum of Berlin's



Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin, Architect: Peter Eisenmann. Copyright: visitBerlin, Foto: Wolfgang Scholvien.

cluster of archaeological museums. After lunch, drive out to Foster's library at the Free University, inspired by the human brain. The Catholic parish church of St Canisius is based on strictly geometrical patterns enlivened through light.

Day 3. Memory: Germany has engaged with its troubled history with as much energy as its dynamic present. The Topography of Terror sits on a site that once housed the SS and Gestapo headquarters. Here, the brief was to commemorate and educate. Later political scars are addressed in Bernauer Strasse (the street along which the Wall ran) where the Berlin Wall Memorial, by Stuttgart architects Kohlhoff & Kohlhoff, uses two six-meter-high corroded steel walls as symbols of the 'Iron Curtain'. The Chapel of Reconciliation, replacing a 19th-century church cleansed from the former 'death strip', provides an ethereal monument in pressed clay and wooden rods (by Berlin architects Peter Sassenroth and Rudolf Reitermann and Austrian clay artist Martin Rauch).

Berlin has become a European hub of science and technology and contemporary architectural contributions reflect this dominance, with an exciting use of materials and technologies. Visits to the Otto Bock Science Center, whose white-ribboned facade represents human muscle fibre in 3D; Bothe

Richter Teherani's renewable-energy-powered EnergieForum; and The Sony Center, German-American firm Jahn's powerful essay in glass and light.

The controversial Holocaust Memorial by Peter Eisenmann is nearby. Visit the Jewish Museum, Daniel Libeskind's jagged, lacerated, powerfully emotive extension to a Baroque palace. Potsdamer Platz, before the war a nodal point in the city centre but subsequently virtually open wasteland. Now it is at the centre of a 50-acre development and a conspectus of international contemporary architecture with contributions from Renzo Piano, Richard Rogers, Helmut Jahn, Hans Kollhoff, Rafael Moneo and Arata Isozaki. Buildings of a wide range of use and design, interconnected with public atria, fill the segments and step up to the towers which front the Platz itself.

Day 4. Triumph, defeat, unity: perhaps no other building is imbued with such mixed associations while remaining the unmistakable symbol of a city: isolated since the war, politically and architecturally, the Brandenburg Gate again is integrated into a stately square, Pariser Platz. Despite strict planning regulations, buildings of individuality and distinction have arisen including the chirpy British Embassy by Michael Wilford and the DG Bank by Frank Gehry. Planned by Axel Schultes and Charlotte Frank, the 'Band des Bundes' is a long rectangle of government

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continued

buildings including the Chancellery which twice crosses the meandering River Spree. The main railway station by Gerkan, Marg & Partners, which opened in June 2006, celebrates unification through its form and transparent appearance. Another potent Berlin symbol is the Reichstag, a ponderous 1880s structure scarred by the vicissitudes of the 20th century, the shell now brilliantly rehabilitated by Norman Foster and topped by the famous glass dome. Dinner is at the rooftop restaurant.

Day 5. Visit the Museum for Architectural Drawing run by the Tchoban Foundation. The 'Kulturforum' was planned in the 1960s by the West as an area for cultural institutions and became a site for Mies van der Rohe's modern-movement New National Gallery. *En route* to the airport visit the Bikinihaus, Germany's first 'concept mall' – part of a listed building complex in the zoological garden area of Berlin. Fly to London, arriving Heathrow c. 8.15pm.

Lecturer

Tom Abbott. Specialist in architectural history from the Baroque to the 20th century with a wide knowledge of the performing arts. He graduated in Psychology and Art History from Carleton College, Minnesota and studied at the Louvre School of Art History in Paris. Since 1987 he has lived in Berlin and has organised and led many academic tours in Germany. Tom has a particular interest in the German and American architectural and artistic modern including the Bauhaus and Expressionism.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £2,280 or £2,050 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £2,740 or £2,510 without flights.

Included: air travel (economy class) on scheduled British Airways flights; travel by private coach throughout; hotel accommodation as described below; breakfasts, three dinners with wine; all admissions to museums, sites; all gratuities for restaurant staff, drivers, guides; all state and airport taxes; the services of the lecturer.

Accommodation. The Regent Berlin (theregentberlin.de): elegant 5-star hotel decorated in Regency style, close to Unter den

Linden. Rooms are of a good size and excellent standard. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? This is a short but tiring tour. There is a lot of walking and very little free time. Average distance by coach per day: 10 miles.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.